

# Rejection at the Gates of Heaven

by Larry Strattner

Emil, the author, always a slacker, never quite dedicated. Toiling in the ranks of obscurity, living beyond the threshold of realization. Unaccomplished, embracing mediocrity.

Never enough words, never enough scenes, never enough mood, never enough conflict. Never enough of anything compelling graced his work. Onward he toiled. It was fun to say, "I'm a writer."

Better said, "I'm a pornographer." Squeeze; knead language, the same way, in the same act, enjoying neither conception nor birth.

Fatigued carrying stacks of envelopes to the post office. Impoverished by the cost of stamps. Depressed with interminable waiting. Emil began sorting desired editors and agents by their willingness to engage in immediate intercourse; to acquiesce to e-mail submission.

His queries became concise. Short letter. Synopsis. Opening 10 pages. Then "bip!" He was in.

He had not accounted for the dating-round-robin factor wherein everyone gets 5 minutes in front of everyone and instantaneous rejection is *de rigueur*. Rejections appeared on his e-mail with disquieting speed. His mood fluctuated like the Dow Jones average.

He went, "bip!" They came back, "bip!"

His hair stood up and his eyeballs bulged with every rejection, "bip!" He took to vodka. Depressed by liquor he added uppers.

They found Emil, face-on-keyboard, his computer still typing 'J' into the limitless memory of gmail.

At the gates St. Peter's assessment affected the same cursory, round-Robin-dating, 5 min. "Short on dedication it seems," he read from notes, "almost inevitably seeking the easy way. A victim of an instant gratification society, nonetheless, visible sloth, one of the

deadly sins, innit? Some Purgatory in order." An audible, "bip!" sounded.

Emil's periphery swirled, up indistinguishable from down.

He shook his head. Coalescing before him, a solid, beefy man, tattoos on muscular forearms, a small slice of hairy skin showing between the bottom of his T-shirt and jeans waistline said, "Hayadoon? I'm Angelo. Welcome toda Staten Island Writah's Woikshop."

